



# NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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## **Volunteers Count Whales in NOAA's Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary**

More than 1000 volunteers counted whales and gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i, and the Big Island for the March events of the annual Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count. Participants tallied humpback whale sightings and documented the animals' surface behavior during the surveys that were held on March 6 and March 27, 2010. The February 27, 2010 event was rescheduled to March 6, 2010 due to the tsunami warning. The sanctuary, which is managed by NOAA, protects humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaiian waters where they migrate each winter to mate, calve, and nurse their young.

The following are the average numbers of whales sighted per 15-minute count period on each of the islands by date:

### ***March 6, 2010:***

**O'ahu – 2 whales  
Kaua'i – 1 whales  
Big Island – 4 whales  
(51 sites due to reschedule)**

### ***March 27, 2010:***

**O'ahu – 3 whales  
Kaua'i – 2 whales  
Big Island – 3 whales  
(59 sites)**

As many as 10,000 humpback whales winter in state waters. Scientific studies have shown that Hawai'i's humpback whale population has been increasing at an annual rate of approximately seven percent. Over time, data from the Sanctuary Ocean Count can be used to corroborate these findings. Hawaiian waters provide critical breeding habitat for approximately two-thirds of the north Pacific stock of humpback whales.

"This month's counts were a great success with over 1000 volunteers participating," said Christine Brammer, sanctuary ocean count coordinator. "The Sanctuary Ocean Count project provides a unique opportunity for the public to learn about Hawai'i's humpbacks while participating in a monitoring effort. Although the population of humpback whales is increasing, entanglement and vessel collisions still threaten the whales."

Less favorable weather conditions on March 6, 2010 may have contributed to the number of whales observed. Volunteers were still successful at viewing many humpback whales performing a variety of behaviors. Other marine wildlife seen during the Ocean Count included Hawaiian monk seals, sea turtles, spinner dolphins, and a variety of sea birds.

For more information on becoming a Sanctuary Ocean Count volunteer in 2011 visit [sanctuaryoceancount.org](http://sanctuaryoceancount.org) or [hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov](http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov). The count is held the last Saturday of January, February, and March of each year.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web:

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary: <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>